

**COMMUNITY STRATEGIES IN COMBATING *BOKO HARAM* INSURGENCY IN  
MUBI, ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

To make life meaningful and ensure societal growth and development, it is imperative to set-up machineries for its safety by all cost. This necessitates the establishment of various security agencies to help in realizing this important task. Over the years, however, several attempts were made by the formal security agencies to combat the rising trend of crimes and in particular the menace of *Boko Haram* insurgency which is considered as a major security challenge in the country. The intensity of the problem prompted community participation in the fight against the insurgency using community-based strategies to complement the effort of the formal security agencies in the north-east, Nigeria. Community strategies entail all efforts put in place by the community members to ensure peace and safety of their environment usually carried out in organized manner and in conformity with the state laws. This paper examines the community strategies in combating *Boko Haram* insurgency in Mubi, Adamawa State. The findings of this paper reveals that community strategies played a greater role in combating *Boko Haram* insurgency through confrontation with insurgents which also led to recapturing Mubi LGA and reduced insurgent activities. The paper recommends that government should intensify the fight against insurgency and other security challenges through community involvement, support and encouragement to complement the efforts of the formal security agencies.

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**Key Words:** *Boko Haram, Community, Insurgency, Strategies*

**Introduction**

Policing specialists and scholars have long recognized the value of community cooperation and participation in generating social order. Specifically, studies from the United States of America (Skogan, 1994 and Fridel, 2004) suggest that policing strategies eliciting community cooperation and participation have a potentially more significant effect on crime than strategies that do not involve the community (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994; Hughes and Rowe, 2007 cited in Adejoh 2014). Despite the efforts by the formal security in combating *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria, the problem still persist due to the inability of Nigerian security forces to effectively

deal with the challenge. This calls for the need to involve community members to complement the efforts of the conventional security in having an effective response to insurgency (Adejoh 2014). Accordingly, Alemika and Chikwuma, 2005, cited in Enechojo (2013) posit that as a response to security challenge in Nigeria, many communities have embarked on community-based security effort in an attempt to improve their safety. Community members in the affected areas have made several efforts in their attempt to combat insurgent activities that poses threats to the community. They adopt different strategies to ensure effective response to the insurgent activities.

Enechojo, (2013) argues that, community self-policing initiatives, voluntary or paid are organized at various levels in the community to help in ensuring security for the residents. These groups are usually youth groups who work independently or in collaboration with security forces to provide security in the community. Adejoh posit that:

Community crime control initiatives have remained popular, acceptable and largely effective in curbing neighborhood criminality and can be recognized to partner with the formal security agencies in the war against insurgency (Adejoh, 2014:195).

He further argues that involvement of community in combating insurgency will make the search for solution more inclusive and participatory and make the challenges posed by insurgency and insecurity a collective responsibility. Accordingly, the frequency of attack by the insurgents led to the formation of Civilian JTF in Borno State and the use of Vigilante groups in Yobe and Adamawa States. These groups join the security forces more especially police and military in all their operations in an attempt to get rid of the insurgent and incapacitate their audacity. In line with this, the community engages in the fight against insurgency in Mubi town through the use of community participants (the hunters, members of the vigilante and community volunteers). Surveillance, intelligence gathering, cordon and search, road blocks and open confrontation were among the strategies used by the community in combating insurgency in the area. The participation of this group of people assists the security forces in driving out *Boko Haram* members out of Mubi town. Accordingly, the Army, Police and other security also supported the formation and training of Civilian JTF and Vigilante/Volunteer groups to help in combating *Boko Haram* insurgency in the affected areas of North-Eastern states (Ismail, 2014).

## **Literature review**

Insurgency is a condition of revolt against constituted authority through sabotage and harassment with the aim of undermining its authority. In other words, insurgency become latent when group of persons use violent methods to resist the enforcement of law or the group oppose the running of an organized governance through bloody violence and insurrection. The term insurgency is an organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or change political control of a region. It is primarily a political struggle in which both sides used armed forces to create space for their political, economic and influence activities to be effective. Insurgency is not conducted by a single group with a centralized military-style command structure, but may involve a complex matrix of different actors with various aims loosely connected in dynamic and non-hierarchical networks. To succeed, insurgency requires charismatic leadership, supporters, recruits, safe havens and funding (often from illicit activities). In the insurgency and all other violent scenes, it is found that youth are at the forefront (U.S Government Counter Insurgency Guide, 2009). There are many factors that became impetus for the formation of the youth violent groups as well as the involvement of the youth in the activity.

According to Aja and Ibebunjo (2013), insurgency employ the use of fear and terror to make their demands popular. Initially, the acts of insurgency are specific threat signals to the nation. Quite often, the victims of insurgency in Nigeria are mostly civilians, expatriate workers and public infrastructure rather than those in Government. For Okpaga et al, (2012), youth in Nigeria are drifting into militancy or insurgency due to adverse unemployment. Alli (2013) also observed that, poor governance is one of the triggering issues behind domestic terrorism/insurgency in Nigeria and Africa in general. Terrorist leaders also use religion to reinforce obedience among their followers (Merari, 1993; White, 2002). In other words, recruitment and allegiance to these organizations are achieved through religious manipulations. According to Schaefer (2014) most successful insurgencies have received some form of state or international support including moral or political support, resources (money, weapons, food, advisors and training), sanctuary (secure training sites, operational bases across the border, protection from extradition), intelligence, organizational aid and in some cases even fighters.

According to the Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency (2009) most insurgent groups have the same intermediate objectives designed to help them achieve eventual domination of a country. Although both military and political means are used to achieve these intermediate objectives, the objectives are essentially political, they include: to limit the ability of government and enhance

the capability of the insurgents to provide public services; to obtain the support or neutrality of critical segment of the general public; to isolate the government from international diplomatic and material support and increase international support for the insurgents; to increase domestic and international legitimacy of the insurgent organization at the expense of the government; to destroy the self-confidence of government leaders and cadres, causing abdication or withdrawal; and to reduce and, if possible, neutralize government coercive power while strengthening insurgent coercive capabilities.

In the Nigerian context, insurgency is defined within the framework and activities of the followings; attack on defenseless civilians leading to the massive loss of lives and properties; prevention of the flourishing domestic and foreign investments and investors and its linkage to murder, genocide and indeed treasonable felony (Okene and Olawale, 2013). Insurgency in Mubi Metropolis is attributed to *Boko Haram* activities which initially began in Yobe and Borno states of the North Eastern part of the country and has resulted in the destruction of many lives and property in the region.

### **Community Strategies in Combating *Boko Haram* Insurgency**

The overall responsibility of protecting the lives and properties of people lies with the government and this form the basis for establishing various security agencies to help in realizing this important task. Several attempts were made by the formal security agencies to combat the menace of insurgency, but the intensity of the problem made it necessary for the community to participate in the fight through employing other community based strategies to complement the formal efforts in combating the menace of insurgency and it has contributed to the success in the fight against *Boko Haram* insurgency in the affected areas. Community strategies entails all efforts (physical and mental) put in place by the community members to ensure peace and safety of their environment and this is usually carried out in organized manner and in conformity with the state laws. It is against this background, that communities organized and implement some strategies of combating crime with the recognition, acceptance and support of government and formal security agencies. Some of these strategies include:

#### ***Community Neighborhood watch/Surveillances***

Surveillance is a very important strategy for crime prevention and control and if it is properly used in tackling *Boko Haram* insurgency, it may contribute in addressing the problem. For example, the major Canadian crime prevention activities and programmes fall into three categories: community surveillance, most often through neighbourhood or block watch; property marking through Operation Identification; and target hardening (Geason & Wilson, 1988).

The community initiates neighbourhood watch with extra vigilance from the members of the community to watch out any suspicious movement, strange faces around their locations and abandoned vehicles loaded with explosives. This led to the arrest of many insurgents in their hideouts within the metropolis. The objective of forming neighbourhood watch in most communities is mainly to prevent crime through increasing vigilance, opportunity reduction through crime prevention awareness, creating and maintaining a caring community; assisting the conventional security forces in detecting crime through prompt reporting of suspicious and criminal activities. It also involves reducing fear of crime by providing information about risk and promoting sense of security and community spirit among vulnerable members of the community; improving police-community relations by providing effective communication through neighbourhood watch messaging systems (Okeke, 2013). He added that, providing information to the police by the community members is a fundamental issue in taking all precautionary measures against security threats in the community.

According to Lab (2010), neighbourhood watch contributes to crime prevention through the heavy use of surveillance; successful surveillance requires the ability to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate users of an area. However, absence of such recognition leaves residents unable to identify someone or something that is out of place. Members of neighbourhood organizations become eyes and ears for the police in the community. It is not possible for the police to be everywhere at the same time. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of community members to assist in the surveillance function of law enforcement agents in order to maintain the safety of lives and properties. In view of the above, community members have made attempts to counter insurgency through neighbourhood watch/surveillances in which people became extra vigilant on the people that move around the community and the kind of activities they do. This has helped in identifying strangers easily where in some cases suspected individuals are questioned or apprehended and handed over to the security agency.

### ***Intelligence Gathering***

Intelligence refers to information that meets the stated, understood needs of policy makers and has been collected, refined and narrowed to meet those needs (Nte, 2013). As contended by Adewumi (2014), intelligence gathering is crucial in combating crimes like insurgency, because acts of insurgency by a group could be difficult to combat with chiefly isolated, weak and inconsistent tools. The operations of the insurgents have signaled a notorious group which uses intelligence with the capacity to expand its networks under the cover of religion and the psychological imbalance resulting from counter-insurgency. Apparently, before planting a bomb, engaging in suicide bombing and attacking a vulnerable or key point, they are aware of when the security is non-existent, relaxed and ineffective. Regardless of the methods employed, separating the leaders from the populace is always a high priority for counter insurgency strategies (Kilcullen, 2004).

However, one of the important hints that enable the success of security is intelligence reports. This is because the availability of this report helps the securities to take proactive measures against all potential security threats. From the inception of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria, the community participated in various activities that led to the arrest, blocking of suicide attackers and in some instances open confrontation with the insurgents. Although the last one (open confrontation) on many occasions led to casualties on both sides.

Wilson & Kelling (1982) cited in Cullen (2014), posit that unchecked social disorder or public incivility is the genesis of serious crime. They argue that, if not immediately checked, minor crimes can escalate to a more serious one. In view of this, the failure of addressing any case of crime at the initial stage will signify a sense of carelessness and lack effective control by formal security agencies and this makes the window to be broken which necessitated the involvement of community members in combating crimes in their community. Community safety can be improved through enforcement of laws and rules of conduct which can be achieved through increasing the presence and involvement of community members in crime reduction operations (Palmiotto, 2000).

Wilson & Kelling (1982) state the following three points in relation to crime occurrence and its control/reduction:

- Neighbourhood disorder creates fear; communities are likely to have a high crime rate when it is filled with youth gangs, street people, the mentally disturbed and prostitutes;
- Neighbourhood provides crime-promoting signals: the neighborhood produce crime-promoting signals when it is filled with deteriorated housing, broken windows and deliberate disorderly behaviour; and
- Police needs citizens' (community) cooperation: in order for the police to successfully reduce the fear of crime and effectively combat crime in the communities, they must win the support, cooperation, assistance and partnership of the citizens (Community members).

Similarly, Ikuteyijo & Rotimi (2010) also emphasized on the collective effort between the formal security agencies and community members in an attempt to reduce crime rate in the community as most crimes are often perpetrated by people who reside within the community which makes it a local problem that can be effectively addressed through collaborative effort between the police and the community members. In view of this, the community members will help by supplying intelligent reports to the police and other security forces in order to have a successful apprehension of criminals (insurgents) and also make plans for other preventive measures against all insurgent activities. This stress the need for community to collaborate with formal security in addressing the problem of crime such as insurgency within their community. This is because security can be effectively assured with the support and assistance of community members.

## **Theoretical Explanation**

### **Broken Window Theory**

Broken window theory (BWT) was propounded by George Kelling and James Q. Wilson in 1982. It is considered a theory of crime based on community informal social control model. According to Wilson and Kelling (1982: 31-32), the central assumption of the theory is that

unchecked social disorder or public incivility is the genesis of serious crime. The theory posits that, if not immediately checked, minor crimes can escalate to a more serious one. In view of this, the failure of addressing any case of crime at the initial stage will signify a sense of carelessness and lack effective control by formal security agencies and this makes the window to be broken which necessitated the involvement of community members in combating crimes in their community. Community safety can be improved through enforcement of laws and rules of conduct which can be achieved through increasing the presence and involvement of community members in crime reduction operations (Palmiotto, 2000).

According to Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2010), Broken Windows Theory emphasized on the collective effort between the formal security agencies particularly the police and community members in an attempt to reduce crime rate in the community as most crimes are often perpetrated by people who reside within the community which makes it a local problem that can be effectively addressed through collaborative effort between the police and the community members. In view of this, the community members will help by supplying intelligent reports to the police and other security forces in order to have a successful apprehension of criminals and also make plans for other preventive measures against all insurgent activities.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey research design which involves the administration of structured questionnaire (with both open and closed-ended questions) and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders (i.e community leaders, community participants and members of the JTF) in the study area. A sample of 348 respondents was selected for the study. It comprised of males and females of 18 years and above. Out of this number, 336 questionnaires were administered, while 12 respondents were interviewed. Statistical packages for Social Sciences (SPSS: Version 22) was used in the analysis of the quantitative data collected.

## **Results and Discussion**

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	175	69.7
Female	76	30.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Age</b>		
Below 20yrs	39	15.5
21-30yrs	123	49.0
31-40yrs	65	25.9
41-50yrs	16	6.4
51 and above	08	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	144	57.4
Married	97	38.6
Divorced	3	1.2
Widowed	7	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Non Formal	23	9.2
Incomplete Primary	21	8.4
Complete Primary	23	9.2
Incomplete Secondary	27	10.7
Complete Secondary	68	27.1
OND/NCE	37	14.7
Degree/HND	45	17
Post Graduate	07	
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	27	10.8
Trading	68	27.1
Civil Service	91	36.3
Artisan	45	17.9
Others	20	7.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
Below N10,000	29	11.7
N10,000 – N20,000	50	19.9
N20,001 – N30,000	52	20.7
N30,001 – N40,000	42	16.7
N40,001 – N50,000	35	13.9
N50,001 and above	43	17.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Table 1 present the Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents; on the sex distribution, majority of the respondents are males with 69.7% while the remaining few are females with 30.3%; on the age distribution, the table revealed that most of the respondents with 49.0% are between the

age bracket of 20 – 30 while those between 51 years and above are the least with 3.2%; on the marital status, the table revealed that majority of the respondents with 57.4% are single while the widows with 2.8% are the least among the respondents; on educational background, the table revealed that the respondents have various qualification in which those complete secondary constitute the highest with 27.1% while the least with 2.8% possess post graduate education; on occupational distribution, 36.3% of the respondents who constitute the highest percentage are civil servants while those with other occupation has the least percentage of 7.9%; on the monthly income, those who earned N20,001 – 30,000 has the highest percentage of 20.7% while those with the income of less than N20,000 constitute 11.7% of the respondents.

**Table 2: Community Strategies in Combating Insurgency**

<b>Modus Operandi</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Neighborhood watch/Surveillance	129 (51.4%)	122 (48.6%)	251
Supply of intelligent report	142 (56.6%)	109 (43.4%)	251
Confrontation with insurgents	208 (82.9%)	43 (17.1%)	251
Nabbing of insurgents	65 (25.9%)	186 (74.1%)	251

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Table 2 presents the strategies used by community in combating insurgency, it indicates that majority of the respondents with 82.9% sees confrontation with insurgents as the most widely used strategy adopted by community in combating insurgency in the study area while nabbing of insurgents is considered the least by 25.9% of the respondents.

In an interview with a member of the vigilante on the strategies used by community in combating insurgency, he revealed that:

The community use intelligent information from other members of the public on the suspected members of the *Boko Haram* and effect arrest identify the actual members and release whosoever is found to be innocent. Those found to be the actual members of the insurgent's group are later handled to the formal security (IDI member vigilante Mubi, 2016).

However, in an interview with another member of the vigilante, he revealed that:

The community engaged in face to face (Physical confrontation) with the insurgents especially when the community became tired of the massive killings by the insurgents (IDI with member of the vigilante Mubi, 2016)

In line with the above, Ismail (2014) who posits that even the army has supported the formation of and trained vigilante/volunteer groups known as civilian JTF to help in confronting the insurgents with a view to combating the menace of their activities. Accordingly broken window theory suggests community involvement in combating crime which can only be achieved through community based strategies such as neighbourhood watch, supply of intelligence etc.

**Table 3 Whether the Strategies help in reducing Insurgency**

<b>Whether Strategies help</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	181	72.1
No	70	27.9
Total	251	100

Source: Field work, 2016

Table 3 revealed that 72.1% of the respondents revealed that the strategies adopted by community help in combating insurgency. However, 27.9% said the strategies did not help in reducing insurgency in the area. This implies that majority of the respondents are satisfied with the strategies used by community.

In line with the above, a community leader interviewed revealed that:

Community strategies has helped in reducing insurgency in the area and this was achieved with the support and assistance of the JTF and this effort helped in making so many people who ran away to return back to their houses (IDI with community leader, 2016).

**Table 4 Assessing Community Participation in Combating Insurgency**

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very Effective	85	33.9
Effective	102	40.6
Ineffective	12	4.8
I don't Know	52	20.7
Total	251	100

Source: field work, 2016

Table 4 revealed that most of the respondents with 33.9% and 40.6% respectively considered community strategies in combating insurgency as effective. However, very few of the respondents with 4.8% sees community strategies as ineffective. This implies that most of the respondents assessed community strategies as effective in combating insurgency and this may be attributed to the level of education of people in the study area which makes them to participate actively in the fight against insurgency as they aware of the relevance of community strategies in combating insurgency.

In an interview with a community leader on the effectiveness of community strategies in combating insurgency the respondent revealed that:

Really, community strategies in combating insurgency was effective and has played a significant role in recapturing Mubi and has done a lot in reducing insurgency in the town (IDI with community leader Mubi, 2016).

However, a respondent from JTF added that:

Despite the effectiveness of community strategies, the level of community's participation depends on the invitation of the formal security agents as not in all operations the community participants are involved because of their level of professionalism and training (IDI with member JTF Mubi, 2016).

In line with the above, Adejoh, (2014) posit that community crime control initiatives have remained popular, acceptable and largely effective in curbing criminality through collaboration with the formal security agencies.

**Table 5 Problem facing the community participation in combating insurgency**

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of logistics	76	30.3
Lack of government support	75	29.9
Lack of JTF's support	39	15.5

Lack of training	61	24.3
Total	251	100

Source: Field work, 2016

Table 5 shows that most of the respondents with 30.3% saw lack of logistics as the major problem of community participation. However, 15.5% of the respondents sees lack of JTF's support as the least among the challenges of community participation in combating insurgency.

A member of the vigilante interviewed on the problems of community participation in combating insurgency revealed that:

The problems are the issues of logistics and financial incentives. The local governments did not provide any support to community participation including logistics and financial incentives but only the military (JTF) gives them some little amount out of their allowances (IDI with member vigilante Mubi, 2016).

Another participant from JTF revealed that:

The vigilante has contributed a lot in the fight against insurgents especially in guiding the (JTF) in going round the city but their problems are lack of monetary incentive, lack of training and professionalism, lack of logistics (IDI member JTF Mubi, 2016).

In line with the above, a respondent from the vigilante proffered solution to the problems of community participation in combating insurgency. He stated that:

The government should provide logistics and financial support to community participation in combating insurgency and ensures instant response to community's call (IDI member vigilante Mubi, 2016).

Another respondent from JTF suggests how community participation could be enhanced in future as he revealed that:

Community participation can be enhanced through continuous recognition of the members of the community as key figures in fighting insurgency e.g. not harbouring criminals, the importance of reporting suspicious people, sustained surveillance (IDI member JTF Mubi, 2016).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, it is concluded that community strategies has played a role in combating *Boko Haram* insurgency in which confrontation with insurgents was the effective strategy used by community in combating insurgency. The paper further concluded that community strategies were effective in combating insurgency considering its impacts in recapturing Mubi town as well as reducing insurgent activities in the town. However, the paper highlights some problems affecting community participation in combating insurgency some of which include; lack of logistics and financial incentive, inadequate training among others.

In line with the findings, the paper recommends that:

1. Government should recognize members of the community as key figures in fighting insurgency and other security challenges with a view of motivating the community members to be vigilant and report any suspicious movement to the security in the area.
2. Government should provide all the necessary support to enhance community strategies in combating insurgency through provision of adequate training, logistics, and financial incentives as well as making an instant response to community's call in order to motivate community participants in combating insurgency.
3. Community leaders (traditional and religious leaders) should take part in public enlightenment on the significance of community participation in combating insurgency.
4. Community members should give maximum support to community volunteers and the formal security in their effort to combat insurgency in the community.

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